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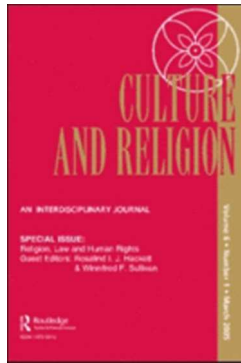
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Religion as practices of attachment and materiality: The making of Buddhism in contemporary London

Friction between Buddhists and Muslims in South East Asia involving violent attacks on religious minorities has become a matter of serious public concern in recent years (Quintana, 2014; Frydenlund, 2015). In contemporary cities of the UK, Europe and Australia, Muslims face an on-going struggle with non-Muslims over public displays of faith, particularly concerning the height of spires, parking issues, or the call to prayer (Naylor and Ryan, 2002). Even the virtually invisible wire delineating the Jewish space of the eruv, the ritual enclosure which reconfigures private space as public on the Sabbath (Vincent and Wharf, 2002), met opposition in the London borough of Barnet. Yet, thorough searches of newspaper articles and scholarly writing revealed no such contestation around the practice of Buddhism. To the contrary, with only a few exceptions (see Waite, 2003), Buddhism is largely invisible in cities outside Asia. It is quiet and rarely, if ever, a matter of concern.

That said, Buddhism is garnering a place in the landscape and urban practices beyond Asia. This paper explores the contemporary articulation of Buddhism in London as it arrives, and becomes increasingly embedded in this global city. The paper's tasks are threefold: to consider how Buddhism fits into the postsecular urban landscape; to ask whether it adds to or modifies existing notions of postsecularism; and to investigate what makes Buddhism distinctive and for whom does it matter? Given Buddhism is a faith rooted in continuous practice, prioritising mindfulness in everyday activity over the periodic worship of deities, we are particularly concerned with exploring the practices that bring Buddhism into being in the city. We have identified three, making practices, attachment practices and connecting practices, which are explored through

rich empirical material presented in this paper. Our core argument here is that Buddhism makes claims to urban space in much the same way as it produces its faith, being as much about the practices performed and the spaces in which they are enacted as it is about faith or a collection of beliefs (following much recent research in religion (Lee 2014, 436)). Before examining these practices in detail, we locate the study in the context of a re-emergence of faith in postsecular cities, and draw on our fieldwork data to describe the landscape of Buddhist practice in contemporary London.

Faith in postsecular cities

Until recent decades, religion was largely absent from research on the urban. In the geographical arena, Kong (1990, 2001, 2010) has played a key role in drawing attention to the early absence of religion in geography (1990), charting the 'new geographies of religion' and suggesting fruitful areas of research (2001). More recently (2010), she has questioned whether what we see in the religious landscape represents continuity or change, exploring the relative emphases and silences in analyses of different sites of religious practice, sensuous geographies, the rise in the discourse of postsecularization (Beaumont and Baker, 2011a; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and Vanantwerpen, 2011; Ley, 2011), and the ways in which religion shapes responses to contemporary global shifts. Other geographers have taken up the mantle (e.g Holloway and Vailins, 2002) exploring the diversity of religious sites in the city, the place of religion in public life, affective and embodied spaces, the contested spaces of minority religious architectures in the city (Naylor and Ryan, 2002; Author, 2005) and transnational spaces of new migrant religious institutions as they adapt and adjust to a new context (Sheringham, 2010).

In a parallel move, scholars in religious studies have called for greater attention to spatiality and space in the construction of religious and spiritual practices and faiths (see Knott, 2008). Similarly, sociologies of religious communities have variously

1
2
3 explored the relationship between religious worship and race, class, cultural identity and
4
5 diversity, and the relationship between religious practice and the material dimensions of
6
7 urban life (Orsi, 2005; Eade and Garbin, 2006; Author, 2011). Beaumont and Baker
8
9 (2011a) have too made significant contributions. They argue that ‘new relations of
10
11 possibility are emerging’ (2011a: 2) as religions, faith communities and secular values
12
13 have returned to the centre of public life and social identity, and, more broadly, examine
14
15 how the built environment reflects this shift. For Beaumont and Baker, the concept of
16
17 the postsecular represents a new and exciting conceptual apparatus to understand cities.
18
19 They identify seven areas of debate: the re-emergence of the idea of the sacred in
20
21 understanding urban space, the importance of the city as a key site of intensity in the
22
23 dynamics of religious-secular change, the return of the language of virtue in public life,
24
25 the on-going commitment of religious organisations to social justice, the connection
26
27 between the growth of Pentecostal Christianity and neoliberal globalization, the re-
28
29 engagement of faith and politics, and the contested understanding of multiculturalism as
30
31 it applies to cases of religious freedom (2011: 4).
32
33
34
35

36 The contested notion of the postsecular is key to these debates. More than
37
38 twenty years ago, Casanova (1994) convincingly dismantled the assumption of a
39
40 singular modernising process of secularisation, drawing attention to social
41
42 differentiation and the ‘privatisation’ of religious faith, and simple notions of religious
43
44 decline. Though there has been decline in the practice of traditional Christian religions
45
46 in Western Europe, there has been a concomitant rise in the significance of other
47
48 religions –notably Islam, Evangelical Christianity in many parts of the world including
49
50 the USA (Woodhead et al. 2009; Davie and Woodhead 2009), as well as the growing
51
52 significance of new religious movements in many Western countries (Bromley, 2007;
53
54 Barker 2013). According to Beaumont and Baker (2011a), the postsecular city is shaped
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by ongoing processes of secularization as well by the re-emergence of public expressions of spirituality. Their focus is on the new religious dynamics and energies brought to the Western, and supposedly secular, city by diasporic flows from the Global South. Their thinking is thus centrally connected to notions of the postcolonial city, in which they identify the importance of supportive and social religious spaces of 'belonging'. Unlike other studies, where Buddhism represents a notable absence, they include the faith within this framework (2011:34). Tse (2014) critiques the secular/religious dichotomy, advocating 'grounded theologies' as a way to study religion in a secular age. Other studies attribute the significance and rise of faith-based organisations to the withdrawal of the welfare state in several domains of public life (Beaumont and Cloke, 2012: 3).

Despite the widening of social science interest in religion, urban research on Buddhism, concerning its emergence and growth in the global cities of traditionally non-Buddhist countries, is relatively sparse (with notable exceptions, for example, McKennie, 2012; Capper, 2003; Chen, 2002). McKenzie (2014) in this journal, has provided an illuminating study of the motivations of practitioners in a Tibetan Buddhist organisation based in Scotland arguing that Weber's notion of rationality and Foucault's notion of discourse offer useful routes to understanding secularisation and sacralisation in the contemporary world. Otherwise, research on Buddhism beyond Asia is principally located in Buddhism specific journals such as the *Journal of Global Buddhism*, in edited collections or, less frequently still, monographs such as Bluck's (2006) history of the major Buddhist movements across the UK to the present. The other key sources are the Buddhist organisations themselves, for instance the various works published by the Triratna Buddhist school publishing house, Windhorse.

In Britain, the first seeds of a mainstream interest in Buddhism were sown with the foundation of the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1907. This was followed in 1924 by the inauguration of a Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society, which developed into what was then also named the Buddhist Society. While the former soon dissolved, the latter retained the name of the Buddhist Society and became the lay Buddhist interest group that still operates today from its base in central London's Eccleston Square (Humphreys, 1937). After World War II, Buddhism began to garner a still broader attention following the publication in paperback of two key texts (Humphrey's *Buddhism* and Conze's *Buddhism: Its essence and development*, both in 1951), which generated a broader popular appeal. This occurred alongside wider social changes, most notably a decline in church attendance, increasing disposable incomes and leisure time, and the emergence of youth cultures of drugs, music and sex (Bluck 2006:10). By the mid 1960s, the number of Buddhist groups and societies was enough to enable specialisation and so attract specific audiences. Bluck presents typology of the Buddhist movements active in Britain today, identifying Theravada Buddhism, East Asian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and what he terms the emergent strand of 'Western' Buddhism. Writing on Buddhism in North America, Coleman (2002) similarly identifies a particular style of Buddhism which he variously terms 'new', 'convert' or 'Western' Buddhism. These 'Western' approaches emphasise meditation, the lack of distinction between lay and non-lay members, and an increased openness to gender equality with women.

Demographically, in research undertaken in North America, most new Buddhists are members of the baby boomer generation who are middle class and of medium to high levels of income and education (Coleman 2008, 2013). Coleman (2002, see also Numrich 1999) distinguishes immigrant or ethnic Buddhists from the cohort of, largely

white, American converts who participate in Western approaches. Preferred places of Buddhist practice are often separated by ethnicity, and even variation of types of Buddhist practice underway at the same temple is divisible along ethnic lines. However, in more recent analyses, the working assumption of a bifurcation between ethnic and Western strands of Buddhism has been called into question for its problematic and imprecise terminology and assumptions. For Hickey, the explicit separation of ethnic and Western Buddhism are problematic because, she argues, 'some of the assumptions underlying taxonomies of American Buddhism reflect unconscious white privilege' (2010:5). Her argument is instructive, both because it makes plain the rhetorical dangers such an approach unthinkingly implies (for instance, why is it that only non-white people are 'ethnic?'), and because it makes it possible to think through a more complex global geography of Buddhism. The editors of the collection *Buddhism in Australia*, similarly demonstrate the culturally and politically problematic nature of bifurcating West and East, noting that 'there has been an increasing circulation of Buddhist monastics, students, books, practice and material culture between the West and the non-West and within the West' (Barker and Rocha 2011:10).

Following such interventions, the research presented in this paper centres on the practices and doings of Buddhism. This is not to argue that such distinctions, imprecise and problematic as they are, are not recognisable across the landscape of Buddhism in London – they certainly are and their consequences played out in the research process. Rather, through a focus on the faith itself, we have sought to foreground the dynamics of Buddhism's unfolding across its various schools in the specifically urban and postsecular setting of London. In other words, our interest is not solely in what Buddhism does, but instead in what Buddhism does to become part of this place. Putting aside these binaries, allows us to view the research in a way that is open to the

similarities and connections of practice between schools as they integrate into the postsecular landscape. In so doing, the framework of Buddhism in practice provides a more coherent way of analysing the complexities and interconnections of different Buddhisms in the city.

The study

The study drew on a range of ethnographic methods. It was initiated through an online survey of London’s Buddhist network, through which a list of thirty-three places of Buddhist faith practice in London was assembled. Places were only included which appeared from their web presence to be well established, likely to endure, and to have a fairly permanent physical presence or to be connected to a larger group or organization (see, Figure 1). For reasons of time and coherency, informal and transitory meditation groups, and meetings that took place in private homes, community centres, or other public and quasi-public buildings, were beyond the scope of the study. We then visited as many of these places as possible, seeking to get a sense of their day-to-day activities, the key people and practices. Over the limited research period, thirteen of the thirty-three sites were visited, all more than once and several for an extended period, with the intention being to accrue knowledge of a diversity of Buddhist practice (see Table 1). One of us participated in activities, interviewed and spoke informally to participants, recorded semi-structured interviews, and wrote field notes. The data from all sites was used to inform the conclusions drawn here, though inevitably it was not possible to incorporate data from all sites in the illustrate material used in this paper. Throughout this paper, the names of the sites visited are cited alongside either the name of the participant interviewed, where agreed, or a pseudonym with general biographic details of gender and age. Selecting pseudonyms was problematic, as interviewees had a mixture of European and Asian names, while some Buddhist orders gave ordained

members new, Buddhist names. In the interests of consistency and to preserve anonymity, a selection of common European names was chosen for all pseudonyms.

The research sought to be broad and wide ranging and was successful in this respect. The diversity of publics engaged with necessitated different data collection methods, and the consequences of this are visible in this paper. While some informants had a fluency in English, and a familiarity with British academic knowledge creation, others were less able to speak the language and felt a mystification or even apprehension around the social science research process. In the former case, ethnographic interviews were collected which have been cited here. In the latter, the data gathered and cited in this paper was predominantly field observations supported by informal and often more factual questioning. This is a key example of the tension between seeking to elide the ethnic/Western binary conceptually while necessarily being required to negotiate with elements of it practically.

Buddhism in London today

In Pinxten and Diktomis's (2009) view, the patterns of association and attachment that held communities of worshipers together in what they call the 'traditional' religions—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—have been radically destabilized by the unprecedented growth and diversity of the large modern city. Consequently, they are experiencing significant transformation under what they call the modern urban predicament. Their assumption is that these religions offered an explanation of the meaning of life and social organization to their believers and that they were able to do so effectively because they functioned in a social context that was small, consisting of tribes or clans, and predominantly rural (Pinxten and Diktomis, 2009: ix–x). As far as Christianity is concerned, the latest UK census bears out this view. From 2001 to 2011 there was an increase in the population reporting no religion, from 14.8 per cent of the

population in 2001 to 25.1 per cent in 2011, and a concurrent drop in the population reporting to be Christian, from 71.7 per cent in 2001 to 59.3 per cent in 2011. What is missing in Pinxten and Diktomis account (Dodsworth et al, 2013) is the corresponding growth in other religions, most notably Islam which rose from 3.0 per cent of the population in 2001 to 4.8 per cent in 2011 and reflecting migrant patterns of settlement in the UK over that decade. Of the other main religious groups: 817,000 people identified themselves as Hindu (1.5 per cent of population); 423,000 people identified as Sikh (0.8 per cent), 263,000 people as Jewish (0.5 per cent). Of specific relevance here was that those who identified as Buddhist had increased from 149,157 (0.26 per cent) to 247,743 (0.4 per cent) from 2001 to 2011 with a slight majority of women (ONS, 2001, 2011). Though overall the number of practitioners is low, this 60 per cent increase in participants over one decade must be regarded as significant. Indeed, it may be that the census data is an underestimate (Bluck, 2004)

Our first concern was to explore what drew people to Buddhism specifically, adding to understandings of the everyday workings of postsecularism. Here, distinctions between Western and non-Western Buddhism were most clearly revealed. Attraction to Buddhism amongst many Western practitioners was articulated in terms of difficult life experiences, a sense of something missing in life, and relatedly a desire for calm and peace in a troubled world. These features were thought to be achievable through meditation, or an encounter with Buddhism on travels overseas. There were many similarities here with McKenzie’s (2014) findings in Scotland, where respondents explained their initial attraction to the Buddhist organisation in terms of wanting to learn meditation, a desire for social contact, spirituality and health issues. For example, Oscar, a 30 year old at LBC, describes his situation at the time he first became interested in the Buddhist faith: ‘I’d recently left a full time job. I’d had experience of

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3 illness- a dragged out physical illness, followed by depression, followed by quitting the
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5 job. Around the same time the relationship I was in ended.' Such a scenario is not
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7 unusual, as the case of Sandra, a woman in her 50s who also attends the LBC,
8
9 illustrates:
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12 In 2000 I became very ill.. And... I had rehab and stuff like that, got my
13
14 sense of balance back- I was absolutely not going to become housebound or
15
16 anything like this. ... I realised I was just angry. I was really, really furious.
17
18 And talking to him a whole lot of stuff from the past came up. I was a very,
19
20 very unhappy. ... So out of that.. I decided I wanted to learn how to
21
22 meditate. I didn't really care anything about Buddhism, but I thought
23
24 meditation might be the way forward.

25
26 (Sandra)

27
28 The experience of Russell, a man in his 30s who is a regular attendee at a Heruka
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30 Buddhist centre, reflects the search for a deeper spiritual engagement:
31

32
33 There was just a feeling that there's a better way of being, or that there is
34
35 something, not missing, but there has to be a better way of being because
36
37 our minds are so overactive, you know. ... And Buddhism was one of the
38
39 first things that I came across. It instantly resonated with me.

40
41 (Russell)

42
43 Others, like Matthew, a practitioner in his 40s at the LBC, and Robert, in his 50s, and
44
45 Yvette, in her 40s, both at the WLBC, sought new practices that facilitated calmer or
46
47 more grounded engagements with the world. Buddhist meditation offered a tool to do
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49 this, particularly when practitioners were motivated by a group setting:
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51
52 I'd tried to ... make this change by myself, so rather quirkily I was getting
53
54 up rather early and trying to meditate, read something spiritual, not Buddhist
55
56 necessarily but spiritual, and I was also trying to teach myself touch typing
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because I wanted to write. So that was my little regime. But I just couldn't keep it going by myself.
(Matthew)

While I was doing my finals I was getting a bit stressed, I was interested in meditation, that kind of thing...I saw that somebody was doing some classes in Buddhist meditation, actually on the campus which I thought was rather convenient. So I went to those and they were taught by a member of the Triratna order... And so that was how it started.
(Robert)

I went on my first retreat in '96. Which kind of came out of a very strong wish to understand myself more deeply. I didn't at that point understand myself at all and felt I was suffering and inflicting suffering and didn't quite understand why that was.
(Yvette)

Finally, global interconnectedness of the contemporary world also had effects. The experience of Alexandra, a women in her early 20s at Jamyang, was echoed by several respondents who had travelled to India or Tibet at some point in their 20s and encountered Buddhist practice:

At the end of our trip..., I think we were gone for two months or so, we ended up in Dharamsala in a centre called Tushita where they teach Tibetan Buddhism in the Gelugpa tradition... it's a beautiful centre, it's surrounded by green, lush things. ... It was blissful... I went home again and felt for the first time when I stepped back home [in Europe], [I had] a real longing for some kind of Buddhist community.
(Alexandra)

Global connections in the postcolonial city have been central to explanations of the growth of religious diversity and sites in recent years. In this respect the less

Westernised Buddhist centres were more similar to other religious sites in London established to meet the needs of diasporic and transnational communities (Sheringham, 2010) although unlike many of these religious settlements, they did not emerge from within newly established migrant communities. Instead, some had existed for a long time and assembled people from across the capital rather than serving locally based migrant communities, or had been founded by monks or other Buddhist officials sent to London for that specific purpose. There was also an intriguing link with Europe here, as London has become something of a hub of European Buddhism. One Jamang participant, Alexandra, moved to London as there was no Jamyang Buddhist centre in her home country in Europe. Likewise, the young Diamond Way movement regarded the establishment of a London base as central in its efforts to be taken seriously as a Buddhist tradition in Europe. Many of Diamond Way's core participants were from other European countries who reported their intention to return home once the centre was off the ground, and they were supported in their work by volunteers from around Europe who made use of low cost flights to visit the centre for short periods when additional help was required.

It is worth noting that further complexities to the global and local connections and networks add weight to the need to disrupt the notion of a fixed binary of ethnic and Western Buddhism in the London context. Although the FGS movement is based in Taiwan, its attendees in London are almost entirely from Mainland China with little representation of the Taiwanese community. The movements of Jamyang, Diamond Way and Rigpa reveal a different but equally nuanced geography of faith and practice. Though their London followers are largely white people of European origin, and like many Western traditions the movements were recently established, their organisational cores are in non-Western locations and they tend to have centres across in the world.

Finally, the Triratna school, founded and based London, reported a growing presence in India where participation in Buddhism can act to efface pre-existing caste structures and generate new forms of social mobility.

Unlike other faiths, Buddhism does not actively seek converts, though there are moves to encourage new practitioners, a task many centres achieve through the publically advertised offer of meditation classes. Differently, at Three Wheels, the expansion of those involved in this Buddhist centre was more subtle, framed in the words of its director, Reverend Kemmyo Sato, in terms of ‘encounters’ and the idea of growth that occurs ‘gradually’ or ‘little by little’ in the accumulation of interested people. People typically remained affiliated with the first school of Buddhism they encountered, despite the diversity of Buddhisms in the city. This unsettles notions that ‘consumer culture’, or openness to choice, defines urban dwellers’ identities or the ways they choose to perform them (Schwarz, 2004). In some scenarios, this consistency of affiliation occurs for self evidently pragmatic reasons. In predominantly non-Western Buddhist centres, for instance, the centre acts as a community space, appearing to play a role in creating homes away from home for nationals of other countries. For instance, Thai language and culture courses are offered for young people at Wat Buddhapadipa, and non-English newspapers and magazines are distributed at almost all Buddhist centres predominantly attended by Asian people.

However, for new converts, the reason for remaining with the first school of Buddhism they approach is more complex and intimately related to the new philosophical understandings of the world participants generate through their affiliation with Buddhism. Initially they regard their arrival as being mere good fortune, a chance encounter with a school in which they feel comfortable and accepted. Later, participants spoke of rethinking that arrival through the lens of karma and inevitability. For Jenny, a

woman in her 30s from the FGS centre, 'At the moment I would say it's a kind of... something linked to karma, it's there. You know, according to Buddhism, everything exists with a reason.' Oscar's response is similar, if more nuanced:

I think it's important not to frame the whole debate in what I would call, and this might sound brusque, secular materialistic terms. ... I don't think I've discovered that the hand of God steered me towards the Buddhist Centre. ... One of the central teachings of Buddhism is called cognition coproduction, it's also known as dependent arising and it just teaches that everything that arises does so in dependence on conditions. So when conditions for a situation are in place, the situation arises.

(Oscar)

The key exception here is the Buddhist Society which offers a diversity of Buddhist practice styles. As Louise Marchant, the registrar, explained:

Why have all these different styles under one roof? Because you can appreciate the diversity of how Buddhism went to different countries, the different forms, how to compare if you wanted to- how to compare how one developed to another... here, you can try them out without actually committing to one form of Buddhism.

(Louise Marchant, registrar of the Buddhist Society)

Buddhism, once arrived at, becomes thought by many through the concept of home (somewhat akin to Beaumont and Baker's (2011b) idea of 'belonging'). This notion of homeliness emerges both on a spiritual level and in terms of the building of community with other people and developing shared connections. Amanda describes this feeling in the following way: 'I can't remember much of the teachings, I can't remember my emotional response to the actual facts about Buddhism. All I remember was some kind of emotional ease, like I was very at home.'

Buddhism as Practices

Building upon this understanding of the way practitioners become engaged with Buddhism in postsecular London, in this section we consider the significance of practices to the processes of becoming and remaining a Buddhist in the city. Here, by being focussed on the ways different Buddhisms converge in matters of practice rather than faith, we seek to explore what is possible and what is required in the establishment of a relatively new faith, and particular schools within that faith, in a postsecular city. We clustered the practices we observed around three themes, making practices, connecting practices and attaching practices, which will be examined in turn.

Making practices

Investigating the materiality of religious attachments in the East End of London, Dodsworth et al. (2013) argued that undertaking material acts of building construction matters (see also, Dwyer et al 2015). This pattern was also clearly evident in our research. On a tour by the building manager during our first visit to Jamyang we recorded these field notes:

The Jamyang centre is in a former courthouse... purchased at auction 1 November 1995, following which there was a careful restoration and conversion of the building that which was undertaken by members of the Buddhist community in communication with groups like English Heritage as the building is Grade II listed. [On the day of our visit, t]here has been a work camp going on for the previous days, during which building users have been making repairs and refreshing paintwork, and there are still signs of that being underway.
(Field notes)

The head monk at Three Wheels, recounted a significant event in this Buddhist centre's history - the making of the Zen garden that was designed by John White, the then

Provost of UCL and Professor of Art History. According to Reverend Kemmyo Sato, White had been impressed by the Zen gardens in Japan where he had practiced meditation even though he was not himself a Buddhist:

A few months after the purchase of the house [in which the centre is located], Professor John White and I were standing in the garden. I didn't like the previous garden very much. The atmosphere was very gloomy... I said to John, 'I would like to change a little bit this garden'. And he suddenly said, 'how about making a Zen garden?'.

Reverend Kemmyo Sato was unable to agree before calling his master in Japan who thought it a 'wonderful idea' which would 'improve the mutual understanding' between the two men. As a consequence the garden was constructed, employing voluntary manual labour over a period of three years. As Reverend Kemmyo Sato reflects, 'John insisted this point, we shouldn't use machines. We did it by hand. "Why are you insisting this point?"'. "It will involve people"... 80 people from the UK and Japan. We had a very nice, yes, happy time at that time.' One hundred and sixty people gathered at the inaugural ceremony of the garden in 1997, including a majority of non-Buddhists, scholars, the neighbours, and those involved in the making of the garden.

FGS represents another illustration. This organization bought a property to convert in London's West End, as Jenny, a woman in her 30s of Taiwanese origin, explains:

I started to volunteer. At that time because everything started from scratch so we didn't have many things like- even the meditation hall. So everything- the wood or whatever- there's a monk, they're actually cutting the wood... So everything had to be very economic and you had to try and do as much as you can by lay people's help without buying them ready cut, ready made.
(Jenny)

Similarly, across the Triratna movement there is a history of doing considerable building works on their key sites, such as the transformation in the late 1970s of the old fire station into the current London Buddhist Centre in Bethnal Green which was undertaken largely by volunteer labour. The former WLBC was in a Victorian house near Royal Oak tube station, which was purchased in the early 1990s, and gradually became too small for the growing number of attendees. Property price increases over the period militated against buying a larger residential property in the area. However, a new building erected nearby included a ground floor and basement required by the local authority to be used for educational purposes only. An agreement was made with the developer to exchange their residential property for a long lease on this, much larger and, because of the limits on its use, much cheaper, premises. Because the new site was essentially a shell that required a complete fit-out, they departed from the normal ways of furnishing a new Buddhist centre, a necessity which generated, as Yvette, a woman in her 40s who was born in the Netherlands sets out, some unease amongst the WLBC's attendees:

Normally, what would happen is that you buy an old place with loads to do and you get your volunteers and everybody starts painting. ... So... just because of this project developer, just because we get this concrete box, we needed to have architects and we've been launched into this whole way of being and operating that we're just not used to at all. Paying all kinds of money which we just find staggering.

(Yvette)

Diamond Way, presently a new and relatively small movement in the UK, established a Tibetan Buddhist Centre in 2013 in the buildings of the Beaufoy Institute in Vauxhall. The buildings, which are Grade II listed, once housed a boys' technical institute which was established in the early 1900s as part of the ragged school movement. When

Diamond Way took control of the site, the buildings had been lying derelict for some time. The objective of Diamond Way was to expand and become more prominent on the London Buddhism stage. Once again renovation proved to be an important part of their narrative, where presently the intention is to construct a ground floor café and Buddhist centre with residential spaces on the upper floors. Because the community is small, the centre has been organising work weekends for members who fly in from across Europe.

Constructing sites through voluntary labour was thus revealed as core to carving out the new Buddhist milieus in London, whilst also serving to generate a feeling community between practitioners. Voluntarism was found to be central across new movements and old ones, different ethnicities, and also different levels of wealth. What was striking, however, in contrast to other faiths that have expanded in recent years (Dwyer, Gilbert, and Shah, 2013; Naylor and Ryan, 2002) was the relative invisibility of Buddhist sites. By occupying former domestic dwellings, old schools and churches, and by electing to mark their presence discretely, their presence had gone largely unnoticed and uncontested by the wider community.

Attaching Practices

Physical involvement in the material construction of Buddhist sites is one way by which Buddhists demonstrate a clear attachment to their community and embed it, albeit subtly, into London's urban fabric. In the course of our fieldwork, we also identified a series of other, more day to day practices, which generate an attachment with Buddhism. These operate to keep people engaged in ways extending beyond purely faith-based practice, and in so doing act to strengthen their connection with the faith, generating Buddhist 'resolve' by involving practitioners in the continual activity of bringing Buddhism into being. Often, they are rooted in the creation of a new, Buddhist, social and cultural identity practices or the maintenance of existing ones. To be able to

do so rests upon the presence of the collective of Buddhist participants available in a large city. By undertaking these activities, individuals build Buddhist practice into their everyday life.

In the running of a large Buddhist centre, there are numerous day to day tasks like cooking and cleaning which need to be accomplished. To undertake these tasks is, on one level, an act of generosity towards the centre, but participants like Jenny and Alexandra, a young woman in her early 20s, also reported finding a particularly Buddhist way by which to undertake them.

Right from the beginning... I was really fully engaged... And simply you ... clean the Buddha statue like those in the service or even go in the reception, answer the phone or help in the main shrine while doing the services.
(Jenny)

In order to graduate along the path, as a Buddhist would say... to expand the mind and become a better person maybe, to use normal words, you would use meditation as a main tool for that... But another way is of doing it by more physical labour... And that's when cooking fits into that. It's just like the way we put our intention to whatever we're doing. We can completely transform that task.
(Alexandra)

Similar contributions take place in non-Western Buddhist centres, too, though perhaps taking different forms. For example, monks do not cook their own food but instead eat food prepared by members of the community that is cooked or heated up in Buddhist centre kitchens. During our observations, one of us ate a meal prepared by women at the Wat Buddhapadipa temple. In Triratna, not only is volunteering on cleaning and maintenance tasks important, but so also are their 'team based right livelihood activities'. These offer a subsistence wage to enable participants to devote their time to

Buddhism and to the organisation without being dominated by the demands of a conventional job. The concept of 'right livelihood' is a particularly Triratna based perspective on the Buddhist teachings around employment which urge followers to earn a living in a way that is positive and does not cause harm (The Buddhist Centre, 2016). It also acts as a way of financially supporting people to take charge of the day to day running of the centres, or to operate small businesses to raise funds. At the London Buddhist Centre, the economic pressures of recent times have put this system under strain, leading to the demise of the Cherry Orchard café which they had been running for several years. However, a second hand bookshop called Jambala, and a second hand clothes shop, Lama's Pyjamas, continue to operate. As Sarah, a woman in her 40s who had much experience on the Centre's right livelihood approaches, these activities generate attachment to the Buddhist faith and opportunities to incorporate Buddhism into day to day practice.

You have to get on with it and find a way of working together. ... the cafe was successful in terms of money for a few years, and it was also very successful in terms of a place for people, women, to practice. It was a women's team, and quite a lot of women got ordained in that situation. You know, in terms of friendship and spiritual practice, I think it really did help people.

(Sarah)

Communal living represents a further route to deepen involvement with Buddhist practice. Many centres have monks living permanently in or adjacent to the site: Wat Buddhpadipa, Wat Buddharam, London Buddhist Vihara, East London Buddhist Cultural Centre, London FGS, and Three Wheels. Monks at Wat Buddhpadipa have a strict schedule to which they adhere, as these field notes from a conversation with several monks describe:

Breakfast is at 6am with morning chanting following at 8am. Then the monks work in the garden or on paperwork in the office until 11am, when they have lunch (they must not have food after midday unless sick or travelling). At 6pm there is evening chanting. Some monks study English at college during the day or study other things. They may also be called out to attend ceremonies or bless businesses.

(Field notes)

By comparison, the more recent or Western focused movements do not have monks in the traditional fashion. However, people often live on site or group together with others to create faith centred communities. Like right livelihood, communal living offers another way to create new cultures and traditions of the kind Oscar outlines.

Thursday's community night so you're in unless you're away... people don't make any other plans in London on a Thursday. And we have dinner in the normal way although it's more relaxed because people spend a bit longer at the table ...Someone makes cups of tea. We go through anything practical, pretty briefly... Then we split up to do cleaning. ...On other community nights, we'd study a bit of text. On every other community night this year we've been doing life stories, so it's a different person's turn each week to tell the story of their life in two hours. And everyone else just listens.

(Oscar)

In this way, through cooking and cleaning, and even the routine practices of living, London's Buddhists generate and strengthen their attachment to the faith.

Connecting practices

Buddhist practice does not take place in isolation from its wider urban community. That said, it is not a faith that sets out to proselytize or actively recruit followers, nor are there calls to prayer or church bells, which contribute to Buddhism's lack of visibility in the city. Nevertheless, Buddhism seeks a presence in London and have a positive impact

upon it, and Westerners involved in Buddhism are typically socially engaged (Cantwell and Kawanami, 2009). Often, these activities bear a resemblance to various other faith-based organisations' voluntary activities in the public sphere (Beaumont and Cloke, 2012). These connecting practices are typologised in the following three key ways, through commercial engagements, the offering of meditation classes to the lay community, and through voluntary activities in the public sphere.

First, there are the commercial engagements that, as well as providing much needed funds, are seen as a way of making their centres relevant and accessible to the wider community.

We've got people going to the second-hand clothes shop who would never come into the Buddhist centre.

(Matthew)

I suppose I'm quite interested in giving people a taste of- you could say a taste of the Buddha's vision without them really knowing about it. It's a bit like at Lama's Pyjamas, not everyone would even know that we're Buddhist, but they might leave the shop feeling, 'wow, I had a really nice chat with her' or 'that was a really good interaction'. They can't quite say what it is but they pick up on it.

(Sarah)

Jamyang has a café, several function rooms and office spaces that can be hired by local businesses, although they are selective about to whom they will rent spaces and limit themselves to small, ethical, businesses and NGOs. They also deploy the former prison cells for renting on a bed and breakfast basis.

Second, meditation has been key for making Buddhism relevant publically for all Buddhist centres, particularly the new Western focussed centres (as McKenzie (2014) also highlighted in a different context). Guided meditation for newcomers to

Buddhism was available at all the centres visited with the exception of the Wat Buddharam. Though there is an aspiration at all centres that such activities will encourage new people to join the Buddhist faith, such an outcome is not obligatory and, generally, the provision is or claims to be welcoming of secular participants.

I think [teaching meditation] is offering life tools to people and those tools are of use to people and it may or may not be that they want to integrate them with the complete package of Buddhism. And I feel I'm planting seeds and it may be in the future that they realise that they want a bit more and they've had a sense of Buddhism and they'll come back to it... It's nice when that happens.
(Robert)

Western Buddhist movements have also made significant inroads into mindfulness courses which are deliberately secular and entirely separate from their Buddhist practice. For example, the LBC has a space specifically designed to be adapted from a Buddhist meditation hall into a secular space called Breathing Space, and Jamyang also offers secular mindfulness meditation. This has reflected a wider public interest in mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn 2006, The Guardian, 2016), and its therapeutic recognition by the British National Health Service (NHS, 2016). LBC's mindfulness initiative followed that of their sister centre in Manchester, who were offering mindfulness retreats for full time carers. As one practitioner, Dr. Paramabandhu Groves, who led the development of Breathing Space at the LBC explained:

[Initially] there was some concern. ..we've always made it very clear that our beginners classes are open to anybody. You don't have to be Buddhist, you can come along and learn to meditate... although we have the big Buddha figure we didn't light the candles because somehow that was being religious, you've got the Buddha figure though [laughs] so it sounds a bit ridiculous I suppose what I'm saying in that is that there was always

sensitivity to .. make it really accessible to anybody and not bash people over the head with Buddhism ... sometimes, actually, I think too much, I think we were almost too shy of saying it's a Buddhist Centre which it obviously was. I think that has changed over the years as Buddhism's become more wide and accessible. ...Having said that, there were some concerns from some quarters.. who feared that in a way it was watering down the dharma.

(Dr. Paramabandhu Groves)

Third, there is engagement with local communities, which was evident in all the Buddhist centres visited. For many centres, particularly those affiliated with older, non-Western movements, the centres act as a point of connection to the country or region of origin. Wat Buddhapadipa in particular has language and cultural classes for children of Thai families and all distribute non-English newspapers from the country of origin. Each of the centres openly encourages visitors to come and look around. Wat Buddhapadipa and the London Buddhist Vihara also had connections with local school that enabling the school to hold assemblies and other events there. Three Wheels, although somewhat hidden in an indistinguishable suburban house opens, its spectacular Zen garden to the public for the National Gardens Scheme's open gardens day (NGS, 2016).

Some Buddhist centres extend a caring role in the local community. For example, at Wat Buddhapadipa we were introduced to a homeless man who regularly attends the temple to eat and help out there. Similarly, on an early visit to the LBC, we witnessed a man in some distress sitting talking to one of the workers in the garden. In a more formalised caring capacity, the LBC also makes its retreat centres in rural parts of the UK available for respite breaks for full time carers of elderly or disabled people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, how does Buddhism fit into the postsecular urban landscape, what makes it distinctive and for whom does it matter? The number of people declaring themselves as Buddhists has indeed risen in recent years, following the rise of other non-traditional religions in the UK, however this research suggests that Buddhism differs from these in several ways. First, it is a faith whose growth is not predominantly attributable to the rise in new migrant communities in the city (though this does have a contributory effect). Rather it owes its growth predominantly to an increased interest expressed by people attracted to the religion for its practices of meditation and mindfulness, which are seen as helpful in dealing with the hectic and stressful pressures of everyday life in the city. Second, Buddhism remains largely invisible in the urban and suburban landscape of London, adapting buildings that are already in place, with little material impact on the built environment; as a result its arrival in the urban landscape has been less subject to contestation than other religious practices¹. Third, Buddhist practices, such as meditation, are quiet, and even where chanting takes place it bears no resemblance to the loud singing and music of many of the new popular religious practices associated with Evangelical Christianity. Buddhism has no sonic presence in the city- there is no call for prayer as in mosques, or church bells. There is no proselytizing and followers find their own way to Buddhist practice, often through a very personal path rather than public, familial or ethnic connections. In each of these ways, Buddhism operates almost under the radar from public view. At a broader socio-political level, Buddhist practitioners from overseas are not associated with wider

¹ This is not to suggest that there are no Buddhist temples in some cities that are purpose built or more visible. In London however, there are few of these.

political or fundamentalist movements, sharing neither the conservatism of some of the Evangelical Christian movements, which is articulated publically in relation to debates around gay equality for example, neither are they subject to wider demonising discourses of association with terrorism which have plagued some Muslim communities.

In this paper we have demonstrated also the importance of religious practices. All Buddhist groups, with varying degrees of both willingness and success, seek to make aspects of their Buddhist faith accessible to the wider community whether through offering catering, public access to their buildings and gardens, or through offering mindfulness-led mental health initiatives. And while Buddhist practitioners might like to encourage outsiders to become part of the faith, these community engagement practices are neither directly nor implicitly motivated by congregation building objectives. This research has thus revealed that Buddhism features as a small but significant part of the postsecular urban landscape, but that it differs in various ways from other religions that have had a growing presence in the city in recent years. This study has shown the importance of a focus on religious practices as well as faith, and contributes to a growing sociological and geographical set of literatures that point to the significance of religion in the making of contemporary urban social worlds.

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**Religion as practices of attachment and materiality: The making of
Buddhism in contemporary London**

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Religion as practices of attachment and materiality: The making of Buddhism in contemporary London

Friction between Buddhists and Muslims in South East Asia involving violent attacks on religious minorities has become a matter of serious public concern in recent years (Quintana, 2014; Frydenlund, 2015). In contemporary cities of the UK, Europe and Australia, Muslims face an on-going struggle with non-Muslims over public displays of faith, particularly concerning the height of spires, parking issues, or the call to prayer (Naylor and Ryan, 2002). Even the virtually invisible wire delineating the Jewish space of the eruv, the ritual enclosure which reconfigures private space as public on the Sabbath (Vincent and Wharf, 2002), met opposition in the London borough of Barnet. Yet, thorough searches of newspaper articles and scholarly writing revealed no such contestation around the practice of Buddhism. To the contrary, with only a few exceptions (see Waitt, 2003), Buddhism is largely invisible in cities outside Asia. It is quiet and rarely, if ever, a matter of concern.

That said, Buddhism is garnering a place in the landscape and urban practices beyond Asia. This paper explores the contemporary articulation of Buddhism in London as it arrives, and becomes increasingly embedded in this global city. The paper’s tasks are threefold: to consider how Buddhism fits into the postsecular urban landscape; to ask whether it adds to or modifies existing notions of postsecularism; and to investigate what makes Buddhism distinctive and for whom does it matter? Given Buddhism is a faith rooted in continuous practice, prioritising mindfulness in everyday activity over

the periodic worship of deities, we are particularly concerned with exploring the practices that bring Buddhism into being in the city. We have identified three, making practices, attachment practices and connecting practices, which are explored through rich empirical material presented in this paper. Our core argument here is that Buddhism makes claims to urban space in much the same way as it produces its faith, being as much about the practices performed and the spaces in which they are enacted as it is about faith or a collection of beliefs (following much recent research in religion (Lee 2014, 436)). Before examining these practices in detail, we locate the study in the context of a re-emergence of faith in postsecular cities, and draw on our fieldwork data to describe the landscape of Buddhist practice in contemporary London.

Faith in postsecular cities

Until recent decades, religion was largely absent from research on the urban. In the geographical arena, Kong (1990, 2001, 2010) has played a key role in drawing attention to the early absence of religion in geography (1990), charting the 'new geographies of religion' and suggesting fruitful areas of research (2001). More recently (2010), she has questioned whether what we see in the religious landscape represents continuity or change, exploring the relative emphases and silences in analyses of different sites of religious practice, sensuous geographies, the rise in the discourse of postsecularization (Beaumont and Baker, 2011a; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and Vanantwerpen, 2011; Ley, 2011), and the ways in which religion shapes responses to contemporary global shifts. Other geographers have taken up the mantle (e.g Holloway and Vailins, 2002) exploring the diversity of religious sites in the city, the place of religion in public life, affective and embodied spaces, the contested spaces of minority religious architectures in the city (Naylor and Ryan, 2002; Author, 2005) and transnational spaces of new migrant religious institutions as they adapt and adjust to a new context (Sheringham, 2010).

In a parallel move, scholars in religious studies have called for greater attention to spatiality and space in the construction of religious and spiritual practices and faiths (see Knott, 2008). Similarly, sociologies of religious communities have variously explored the relationship between religious worship and race, class, cultural identity and diversity, and the relationship between religious practice and the material dimensions of urban life (Orsi, 2005; Eade and Garbin, 2006; Author, 2011). Beaumont and Baker (2011a) have too made significant contributions. They argue that ‘new relations of possibility are emerging’ (2011a: 2) as religions, faith communities and secular values have returned to the centre of public life and social identity, and, more broadly, examine how the built environment reflects this shift. For Beaumont and Baker, the concept of the postsecular represents a new and exciting conceptual apparatus to understand cities. They identify seven areas of debate: the re-emergence of the idea of the sacred in understanding urban space, the importance of the city as a key site of intensity in the dynamics of religious-secular change, the return of the language of virtue in public life, the on-going commitment of religious organisations to social justice, the connection between the growth of Pentecostal Christianity and neoliberal globalization, the re-engagement of faith and politics, and the contested understanding of multiculturalism as it applies to cases of religious freedom (2011: 4).

The contested notion of the postsecular is key to these debates. More than twenty years ago, Casanova (1994) convincingly dismantled the assumption of a singular modernising process of secularisation, drawing attention to social differentiation and the ‘privatisation’ of religious faith, and simple notions of religious decline. Though there has been decline in the practice of traditional Christian religions in Western Europe, there has been a concomitant rise in the significance of other religions –notably Islam, Evangelical Christianity in many parts of the world including

the USA (Woodhead et al. 2009; Davie and Woodhead 2009), as well as the growing significance of new religious movements in many Western countries (Bromley, 2007; Barker 2013). According to Beaumont and Baker (2011a), the postsecular city is shaped by ongoing processes of secularization as well by the re-emergence of public expressions of spirituality. Their focus is on the new religious dynamics and energies brought to the Western, and supposedly secular, city by diasporic flows from the Global South. Their thinking is thus centrally connected to notions of the postcolonial city, in which they identify the importance of supportive and social religious spaces of 'belonging'. Unlike other studies, where Buddhism represents a notable absence, they include the faith within this framework (2011:34). Tse (2014) critiques the secular/religious dichotomy, advocating 'grounded theologies' as a way to study religion in a secular age. Other studies attribute the significance and rise of faith-based organisations to the withdrawal of the welfare state in several domains of public life (Beaumont and Cloke, 2012: 3).

Despite the widening of social science interest in religion, urban research on Buddhism, concerning its emergence and growth in the global cities of traditionally non-Buddhist countries, is relatively sparse (with notable exceptions, for example, McKennie, 2012; Capper, 2003; Chen, 2002). McKenzie (2014) in this journal, has provided an illuminating study of the motivations of practitioners in a Tibetan Buddhist organisation based in Scotland arguing that Weber's notion of rationality and Foucault's notion of discourse offer useful routes to understanding secularisation and sacralisation in the contemporary world. Otherwise, research on Buddhism beyond Asia is principally located in Buddhism specific journals such as the *Journal of Global Buddhism*, in edited collections or, less frequently still, monographs such as Bluck's (2006) history of the major Buddhist movements across the UK to the present. The

other key sources are the Buddhist organisations themselves, for instance the various works published by the Triratna Buddhist school publishing house, Windhorse.

In Britain, the first seeds of a mainstream interest in Buddhism were sown with the foundation of the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1907. This was followed in 1924 by the inauguration of a Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society, which developed into what was then also named the Buddhist Society. While the former soon dissolved, the latter retained the name of the Buddhist Society and became the lay Buddhist interest group that still operates today from its base in central London's Eccleston Square (Humphreys, 1937). After World War II, Buddhism began to garner a still broader attention following the publication in paperback of two key texts (Humphrey's *Buddhism* and Conze's *Buddhism: Its essence and development*, both in 1951), which generated a broader popular appeal. This occurred alongside wider social changes, most notably a decline in church attendance, increasing disposable incomes and leisure time, and the emergence of youth cultures of drugs, music and sex (Bluck 2006:10). By the mid 1960s, the number of Buddhist groups and societies was enough to enable specialisation and so attract specific audiences. Bluck presents typology of the Buddhist movements active in Britain today, identifying Theravada Buddhism, East Asian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and what he terms the emergent strand of 'Western' Buddhism. Writing on Buddhism in North America, Coleman (2002) similarly identifies a particular style of Buddhism which he variously terms 'new', 'convert' or 'Western' Buddhism. These 'Western' approaches emphasise meditation, the lack of distinction between lay and non-lay members, and an increased openness to gender equality with women.

Demographically, in research undertaken in North America, most new Buddhists are members of the baby boomer generation who are middle class and of medium to

high levels of income and education (Coleman 2008, 2013). Coleman (2002, see also Numrich 1999) distinguishes immigrant or ethnic Buddhists from the cohort of, largely white, American converts who participate in Western approaches. Preferred places of Buddhist practice are often separated by ethnicity, and even variation of types of Buddhist practice underway at the same temple is divisible along ethnic lines. However, in more recent analyses, the working assumption of a bifurcation between ethnic and Western strands of Buddhism has been called into question for its problematic and imprecise terminology and assumptions. For Hickey, the explicit separation of ethnic and Western Buddhism are problematic because, she argues, ‘some of the assumptions underlying taxonomies of American Buddhism reflect unconscious white privilege’ (2010:5). Her argument is instructive, both because it makes plain the rhetorical dangers such an approach unthinkingly implies (for instance, why is it that only non-white people are ‘ethnic’?), and because it makes it possible to think through a more complex global geography of Buddhism. The editors of the collection *Buddhism in Australia*, similarly demonstrate the culturally and politically problematic nature of bifurcating West and East, noting that ‘there has been an increasing circulation of Buddhist monastics, students, books, practice and material culture between the West and the non-West and within the West’ (Barker and Rocha 2011:10).

Following such interventions, the research presented in this paper centres on the practices and doings of Buddhism. This is not to argue that such distinctions, imprecise and problematic as they are, are not recognisable across the landscape of Buddhism in London – they certainly are and their consequences played out in the research process. Rather, through a focus on the faith itself, we have sought to foreground the dynamics of Buddhism’s unfolding across its various schools in the specifically urban and postsecular setting of London. In other words, our interest is not solely in what

Buddhism does, but instead in what Buddhism does to become part of this place. Putting aside these binaries, allows us to view the research in a way that is open to the similarities and connections of practice between schools as they integrate into the postsecular landscape. In so doing, the framework of Buddhism in practice provides a more coherent way of analysing the complexities and interconnections of different Buddhisms in the city.

The study

The study drew on a range of ethnographic methods. It was initiated through an online survey of London’s Buddhist network, through which a list of thirty-three places of Buddhist faith practice in London was assembled. Places were only included which appeared from their web presence to be well established, likely to endure, and to have a fairly permanent physical presence or to be connected to a larger group or organization (see, Figure 1). For reasons of time and coherency, informal and transitory meditation groups, and meetings that took place in private homes, community centres, or other public and quasi-public buildings, were beyond the scope of the study. We then visited as many of these places as possible, seeking to get a sense of their day-to-day activities, the key people and practices. Over the limited research period, thirteen of the thirty-three sites were visited, all more than once and several for an extended period, with the intention being to accrue knowledge of a diversity of Buddhist practice (see Table 1). One of us participated in activities, interviewed and spoke informally to participants, recorded semi-structured interviews, and wrote field notes. The data from all sites was used to inform the conclusions drawn here, though inevitably it was not possible to incorporate data from all sites in the illustrate material used in this paper. Throughout this paper, the names of the sites visited are cited alongside either the name of the participant interviewed, where agreed, or a pseudonym with general biographic details

of gender and age. Selecting pseudonyms was problematic, as interviewees had a mixture of European and Asian names, while some Buddhist orders gave ordained members new, Buddhist names. In the interests of consistency and to preserve anonymity, a selection of common European names was chosen for all pseudonyms.

The research sought to be broad and wide ranging and was successful in this respect. The diversity of publics engaged with necessitated different data collection methods, and the consequences of this are visible in this paper. While some informants had a fluency in English, and a familiarity with British academic knowledge creation, others were less able to speak the language and felt a mystification or even apprehension around the social science research process. In the former case, ethnographic interviews were collected which have been cited here. In the latter, the data gathered and cited in this paper was predominantly field observations supported by informal and often more factual questioning. This is a key example of the tension between seeking to elide the ethnic/Western binary conceptually while necessarily being required to negotiate with elements of it practically.

Buddhism in London today

In Pinxten and Diktomis's (2009) view, the patterns of association and attachment that held communities of worshipers together in what they call the 'traditional' religions—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—have been radically destabilized by the unprecedented growth and diversity of the large modern city. Consequently, they are experiencing significant transformation under what they call the modern urban predicament. Their assumption is that these religions offered an explanation of the meaning of life and social organization to their believers and that they were able to do so effectively because they functioned in a social context that was small, consisting of tribes or clans, and predominantly rural (Pinxten and Diktomis, 2009: ix–x). As far as

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Christianity is concerned, the latest UK census bears out this view. From 2001 to 2011 there was an increase in the population reporting no religion, from 14.8 per cent of the population in 2001 to 25.1 per cent in 2011, and a concurrent drop in the population reporting to be Christian, from 71.7 per cent in 2001 to 59.3 per cent in 2011. What is missing in Pinxten and Diktomis account (Dodsworth et al, 2013) is the corresponding growth in other religions, most notably Islam which rose from 3.0 per cent of the population in 2001 to 4.8 per cent in 2011 and reflecting migrant patterns of settlement in the UK over that decade. Of the other main religious groups: 817,000 people identified themselves as Hindu (1.5 per cent of population); 423,000 people identified as Sikh (0.8 per cent), 263,000 people as Jewish (0.5 per cent). Of specific relevance here was that those who identified as Buddhist had increased from 149,157 (0.26 per cent) to 247,743 (0.4 per cent) from 2001 to 2011 with a slight majority of women (ONS, 2001, 2011). Though overall the number of practitioners is low, this 60 per cent increase in participants over one decade must be regarded as significant. Indeed, it may be that the census data is an underestimate (Bluck, 2004)

Our first concern was to explore what drew people to Buddhism specifically, adding to understandings of the everyday workings of postsecularism. Here, distinctions between Western and non-Western Buddhism were most clearly revealed. Attraction to Buddhism amongst many Western practitioners was articulated in terms of difficult life experiences, a sense of something missing in life, and relatedly a desire for calm and peace in a troubled world. These features were thought to be achievable through meditation, or an encounter with Buddhism on travels overseas. There were many similarities here with McKenzie’s (2014) findings in Scotland, where respondents explained their initial attraction to the Buddhist organisation in terms of wanting to learn meditation, a desire for social contact, spirituality and health issues. For example,

Oscar, a 30 year old at LBC, describes his situation at the time he first became interested in the Buddhist faith: 'I'd recently left a full time job. I'd had experience of illness- a dragged out physical illness, followed by depression, followed by quitting the job. Around the same time the relationship I was in ended.' Such a scenario is not unusual, as the case of Sandra, a woman in her 50s who also attends the LBC, illustrates:

In 2000 I became very ill.. And... I had rehab and stuff like that, got my sense of balance back- I was absolutely not going to become housebound or anything like this. ... I realised I was just angry. I was really, really furious. And talking to him a whole lot of stuff from the past came up. I was a very, very unhappy. ... So out of that.. I decided I wanted to learn how to meditate. I didn't really care anything about Buddhism, but I thought meditation might be the way forward.

(Sandra)

The experience of Russell, a man in his 30s who is a regular attendee at a Heruka Buddhist centre, reflects the search for a deeper spiritual engagement:

There was just a feeling that there's a better way of being, or that there is something, not missing, but there has to be a better way of being because our minds are so overactive, you know. ... And Buddhism was one of the first things that I came across. It instantly resonated with me.

(Russell)

Others, like Matthew, a practitioner in his 40s at the LBC, and Robert, in his 50s, and Yvette, in her 40s, both at the WLBC, sought new practices that facilitated calmer or more grounded engagements with the world. Buddhist meditation offered a tool to do this, particularly when practitioners were motivated by a group setting:

I'd tried to ... make this change by myself, so rather quirkily I was getting up rather early and trying to meditate, read something spiritual, not Buddhist necessarily but spiritual, and I was also trying to teach myself touch typing because I wanted to write. So that was my little regime. But I just couldn't keep it going by myself.

(Matthew)

While I was doing my finals I was getting a bit stressed, I was interested in meditation, that kind of thing... I saw that somebody was doing some classes in Buddhist meditation, actually on the campus which I thought was rather convenient. So I went to those and they were taught by a member of the Triratna order... And so that was how it started.

(Robert)

I went on my first retreat in '96. Which kind of came out of a very strong wish to understand myself more deeply. I didn't at that point understand myself at all and felt I was suffering and inflicting suffering and didn't quite understand why that was.

(Yvette)

Finally, global interconnectedness of the contemporary world also had effects. The experience of Alexandra, a women in her early 20s at Jamyang, was echoed by several respondents who had travelled to India or Tibet at some point in their 20s and encountered Buddhist practice:

At the end of our trip..., I think we were gone for two months or so, we ended up in Dharamsala in a centre called Tushita where they teach Tibetan Buddhism in the Gelugpa tradition... it's a beautiful centre, it's surrounded by green, lush things. ... It was blissful... I went home again and felt for the first time when I stepped back home [in Europe], [I had] a real longing for some kind of Buddhist community.

(Alexandra)

Global connections in the postcolonial city have been central to explanations of the growth of religious diversity and sites in recent years. In this respect the less Westernised Buddhist centres were more similar to other religious sites in London established to meet the needs of diasporic and transnational communities (Sheringham, 2010) although unlike many of these religious settlements, they did not emerge from within newly established migrant communities. Instead, some had existed for a long time and assembled people from across the capital rather than serving locally based migrant communities, or had been founded by monks or other Buddhist officials sent to London for that specific purpose. There was also an intriguing link with Europe here, as London has become something of a hub of European Buddhism. One Jamang participant, Alexandra, moved to London as there was no Jamyang Buddhist centre in her home country in Europe. Likewise, the young Diamond Way movement regarded the establishment of a London base as central in its efforts to be taken seriously as a Buddhist tradition in Europe. Many of Diamond Way's core participants were from other European countries who reported their intention to return home once the centre was off the ground, and they were supported in their work by volunteers from around Europe who made use of low cost flights to visit the centre for short periods when additional help was required.

It is worth noting that further complexities to the global and local connections and networks add weight to the need to disrupt the notion of a fixed binary of ethnic and Western Buddhism in the London context. Although the FGS movement is based in Taiwan, its attendees in London are almost entirely from Mainland China with little representation of the Taiwanese community. The movements of Jamyang, Diamond Way and Rigpa reveal a different but equally nuanced geography of faith and practice. Though their London followers are largely white people of European origin, and like

many Western traditions the movements were recently established, their organisational cores are in non-Western locations and they tend to have centres across in the world. Finally, the Triratna school, founded and based London, reported a growing presence in India where participation in Buddhism can act to efface pre-existing caste structures and generate new forms of social mobility.

Unlike other faiths, Buddhism does not actively seek converts, though there are moves to encourage new practitioners, a task many centres achieve through the publically advertised offer of meditation classes. Differently, at Three Wheels, the expansion of those involved in this Buddhist centre was more subtle, framed in the words of its director, Reverend Kemmyo Sato, in terms of ‘encounters’ and the idea of growth that occurs ‘gradually’ or ‘little by little’ in the accumulation of interested people. People typically remained affiliated with the first school of Buddhism they encountered, despite the diversity of Buddhisms in the city. This unsettles notions that ‘consumer culture’, or openness to choice, defines urban dwellers’ identities or the ways they choose to perform them (Schwarz, 2004). In some scenarios, this consistency of affiliation occurs for self evidently pragmatic reasons. In predominantly non-Western Buddhist centres, for instance, the centre acts as a community space, appearing to play a role in creating homes away from home for nationals of other countries. For instance, Thai language and culture courses are offered for young people at Wat Buddhapadipa, and non-English newspapers and magazines are distributed at almost all Buddhist centres predominantly attended by Asian people.

However, for new converts, the reason for remaining with the first school of Buddhism they approach is more complex and intimately related to the new philosophical understandings of the world participants generate through their affiliation with Buddhism. Initially they regard their arrival as being mere good fortune, a chance

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3 encounter with a school in which they feel comfortable and accepted. Later, participants
4 spoke of rethinking that arrival through the lens of karma and inevitability. For Jenny, a
5 woman in her 30s from the FGS centre, 'At the moment I would say it's a kind of...
6 something linked to karma, it's there. You know, according to Buddhism, everything
7 exists with a reason.' Oscar's response is similar, if more nuanced:
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15 I think it's important not to frame the whole debate in what I would call, and
16 this might sound brusque, secular materialistic terms. ... I don't think I've
17 discovered that the hand of God steered me towards the Buddhist Centre. ...
18 One of the central teachings of Buddhism is called cognition coproduction,
19 it's also known as dependent arising and it just teaches that everything that
20 arises does so in dependence on conditions. So when conditions for a
21 situation are in place, the situation arises.
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27 (Oscar)
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30 The key exception here is the Buddhist Society which offers a diversity of Buddhist
31 practice styles. As Louise Marchant, the registrar, explained:
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35 Why have all these different styles under one roof? Because you can
36 appreciate the diversity of how Buddhism went to different countries, the
37 different forms, how to compare if you wanted to- how to compare how one
38 developed to another... here, you can try them out without actually
39 committing to one form of Buddhism.
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44 (Louise Marchant, registrar of the Buddhist Society)
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47 Buddhism, once arrived at, becomes thought by many through the concept of home
48 (somewhat akin to Beaumont and Baker's (2011b) idea of 'belonging'). This notion of
49 homeliness emerges both on a spiritual level and in terms of the building of community
50 with other people and developing shared connections. Amanda describes this feeling in
51 the following way: 'I can't remember much of the teachings, I can't remember my
52 emotional response to the actual facts about Buddhism. All I remember was some kind
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of emotional ease, like I was very at home.’

Buddhism as Practices

Building upon this understanding of the way practitioners become engaged with Buddhism in postsecular London, in this section we consider the significance of practices to the processes of becoming and remaining a Buddhist in the city. Here, by being focussed on the ways different Buddhisms converge in matters of practice rather than faith, we seek to explore what is possible and what is required in the establishment of a relatively new faith, and particular schools within that faith, in a postsecular city. We clustered the practices we observed around three themes, making practices, connecting practices and attaching practices, which will be examined in turn.

Making practices

Investigating the materiality of religious attachments in the East End of London, Dodsworth et al. (2013) argued that undertaking material acts of building construction matters (see also, Dwyer et al 2015). This pattern was also clearly evident in our research. On a tour by the building manager during our first visit to Jamyang we recorded these field notes:

The Jamyang centre is in a former courthouse... purchased at auction 1 November 1995, following which there was a careful restoration and conversion of the building that which was undertaken by members of the Buddhist community in communication with groups like English Heritage as the building is Grade II listed. [On the day of our visit, t]here has been a work camp going on for the previous days, during which building users have been making repairs and refreshing paintwork, and there are still signs of that being underway.
(Field notes)

The head monk at Three Wheels, recounted a significant event in this Buddhist centre's history - the making of the Zen garden that was designed by John White, the then Provost of UCL and Professor of Art History. According to Reverend Kemmyo Sato, White had been impressed by the Zen gardens in Japan where he had practiced meditation even though he was not himself a Buddhist:

A few months after the purchase of the house [in which the centre is located], Professor John White and I were standing in the garden. I didn't like the previous garden very much. The atmosphere was very gloomy... I said to John, 'I would like to change a little bit this garden'. And he suddenly said, 'how about making a Zen garden?'.

Reverend Kemmyo Sato was unable to agree before calling his master in Japan who thought it a 'wonderful idea' which would 'improve the mutual understanding' between the two men. As a consequence the garden was constructed, employing voluntary manual labour over a period of three years. As Reverend Kemmyo Sato reflects, 'John insisted this point, we shouldn't use machines. We did it by hand. "Why are you insisting this point?" "It will involve people"... 80 people from the UK and Japan. We had a very nice, yes, happy time at that time.' One hundred and sixty people gathered at the inaugural ceremony of the garden in 1997, including a majority of non-Buddhists, scholars, the neighbours, and those involved in the making of the garden.

FGS represents another illustration. This organization bought a property to convert in London's West End, as Jenny, a woman in her 30s of Taiwanese origin, explains:

I started to volunteer. At that time because everything started from scratch so we didn't have many things like- even the meditation hall. So everything- the wood or whatever- there's a monk, they're actually cutting the wood... So

everything had to be very economic and you had to try and do as much as you can by lay people's help without buying them ready cut, ready made.
(Jenny)

Similarly, across the Triratna movement there is a history of doing considerable building works on their key sites, such as the transformation in the late 1970s of the old fire station into the current London Buddhist Centre in Bethnal Green which was undertaken largely by volunteer labour. The former WLBC was in a Victorian house near Royal Oak tube station, which was purchased in the early 1990s, and gradually became too small for the growing number of attendees. Property price increases over the period militated against buying a larger residential property in the area. However, a new building erected nearby included a ground floor and basement required by the local authority to be used for educational purposes only. An agreement was made with the developer to exchange their residential property for a long lease on this, much larger and, because of the limits on its use, much cheaper, premises. Because the new site was essentially a shell that required a complete fit-out, they departed from the normal ways of furnishing a new Buddhist centre, a necessity which generated, as Yvette, a woman in her 40s who was born in the Netherlands sets out, some unease amongst the WLBC's attendees:

Normally, what would happen is that you buy an old place with loads to do and you get your volunteers and everybody starts painting. ... So... just because of this project developer, just because we get this concrete box, we needed to have architects and we've been launched into this whole way of being and operating that we're just not used to at all. Paying all kinds of money which we just find staggering.
(Yvette)

Diamond Way, presently a new and relatively small movement in the UK, established a

Tibetan Buddhist Centre in 2013 in the buildings of the Beaufoy Institute in Vauxhall. The buildings, which are Grade II listed, once housed a boys' technical institute which was established in the early 1900s as part of the ragged school movement. When Diamond Way took control of the site, the buildings had been lying derelict for some time. The objective of Diamond Way was to expand and become more prominent on the London Buddhism stage. Once again renovation proved to be an important part of their narrative, where presently the intention is to construct a ground floor café and Buddhist centre with residential spaces on the upper floors. Because the community is small, the centre has been organising work weekends for members who fly in from across Europe.

Constructing sites through voluntary labour was thus revealed as core to carving out the new Buddhist milieus in London, whilst also serving to generate a feeling community between practitioners. Voluntarism was found to be central across new movements and old ones, different ethnicities, and also different levels of wealth. What was striking, however, in contrast to other faiths that have expanded in recent years (Dwyer, Gilbert, and Shah, 2013; Naylor and Ryan, 2002) was the relative invisibility of Buddhist sites. By occupying former domestic dwellings, old schools and churches, and by electing to mark their presence discretely, their presence had gone largely unnoticed and uncontested by the wider community.

Attaching Practices

Physical involvement in the material construction of Buddhist sites is one way by which Buddhists demonstrate a clear attachment to their community and embed it, albeit subtly, into London's urban fabric. In the course of our fieldwork, we also identified a series of other, more day to day practices, which generate an attachment with Buddhism. These operate to keep people engaged in ways extending beyond purely faith-based practice, and in so doing act to strengthen their connection with the faith,

generating Buddhist ‘resolve’ by involving practitioners in the continual activity of bringing Buddhism into being. Often, they are rooted in the creation of a new, Buddhist, social and cultural identity practices or the maintenance of existing ones. To be able to do so rests upon the presence of the collective of Buddhist participants available in a large city. By undertaking these activities, individuals build Buddhist practice into their everyday life.

In the running of a large Buddhist centre, there are numerous day to day tasks like cooking and cleaning which need to be accomplished. To undertake these tasks is, on one level, an act of generosity towards the centre, but participants like Jenny and Alexandra, a young woman in her early 20s, also reported finding a particularly Buddhist way by which to undertake them.

Right from the beginning... I was really fully engaged... And simply you ... clean the Buddha statue like those in the service or even go in the reception, answer the phone or help in the main shrine while doing the services.
(Jenny)

In order to graduate along the path, as a Buddhist would say... to expand the mind and become a better person maybe, to use normal words, you would use meditation as a main tool for that... But another way is of doing it by more physical labour... And that's when cooking fits into that. It's just like the way we put our intention to whatever we're doing. We can completely transform that task.
(Alexandra)

Similar contributions take place in non-Western Buddhist centres, too, though perhaps taking different forms. For example, monks do not cook their own food but instead eat food prepared by members of the community that is cooked or heated up in Buddhist centre kitchens. During our observations, one of us ate a meal prepared by women at the

Wat Buddhapadipa temple. In Triratna, not only is volunteering on cleaning and maintenance tasks important, but so also are their 'team based right livelihood activities'. These offer a subsistence wage to enable participants to devote their time to Buddhism and to the organisation without being dominated by the demands of a conventional job. The concept of 'right livelihood' is a particularly Triratna based perspective on the Buddhist teachings around employment which urge followers to earn a living in a way that is positive and does not cause harm (The Buddhist Centre, 2016). It also acts as a way of financially supporting people to take charge of the day to day running of the centres, or to operate small businesses to raise funds. At the London Buddhist Centre, the economic pressures of recent times have put this system under strain, leading to the demise of the Cherry Orchard café which they had been running for several years. However, a second hand bookshop called Jambala, and a second hand clothes shop, Lama's Pyjamas, continue to operate. As Sarah, a woman in her 40s who had much experience on the Centre's right livelihood approaches, these activities generate attachment to the Buddhist faith and opportunities to incorporate Buddhism into day to day practice.

You have to get on with it and find a way of working together. ... the cafe was successful in terms of money for a few years, and it was also very successful in terms of a place for people, women, to practice. It was a women's team, and quite a lot of women got ordained in that situation. You know, in terms of friendship and spiritual practice, I think it really did help people.

(Sarah)

Communal living represents a further route to deepen involvement with Buddhist practice. Many centres have monks living permanently in or adjacent to the site: Wat Buddhapadipa, Wat Buddharam, London Buddhist Vihara, East London Buddhist

Cultural Centre, London FGS, and Three Wheels. Monks at Wat Buddhapadipa have a strict schedule to which they adhere, as these field notes from a conversation with several monks describe:

Breakfast is at 6am with morning chanting following at 8am. Then the monks work in the garden or on paperwork in the office until 11am, when they have lunch (they must not have food after midday unless sick or travelling). At 6pm there is evening chanting. Some monks study English at college during the day or study other things. They may also be called out to attend ceremonies or bless businesses.

(Field notes)

By comparison, the more recent or Western focused movements do not have monks in the traditional fashion. However, people often live on site or group together with others to create faith centred communities. Like right livelihood, communal living offers another way to create new cultures and traditions of the kind Oscar outlines.

Thursday's community night so you're in unless you're away... people don't make any other plans in London on a Thursday. And we have dinner in the normal way although it's more relaxed because people spend a bit longer at the table ...Someone makes cups of tea. We go through anything practical, pretty briefly... Then we split up to do cleaning. ...On other community nights, we'd study a bit of text. On every other community night this year we've been doing life stories, so it's a different person's turn each week to tell the story of their life in two hours. And everyone else just listens.

(Oscar)

In this way, through cooking and cleaning, and even the routine practices of living, London's Buddhists generate and strengthen their attachment to the faith.

Connecting practices

Buddhist practice does not take place in isolation from its wider urban community. That said, it is not a faith that sets out to proselytize or actively recruit followers, nor are there calls to prayer or church bells, which contribute to Buddhism's lack of visibility in the city. Nevertheless, Buddhism seeks a presence in London and have a positive impact upon it, and Westerners involved in Buddhism are typically socially engaged (Cantwell and Kawanami, 2009). Often, these activities bear a resemblance to various other faith-based organisations' voluntary activities in the public sphere (Beaumont and Cloke, 2012). These connecting practices are typologised in the following three key ways, through commercial engagements, the offering of meditation classes to the lay community, and through voluntary activities in the public sphere.

First, there are the commercial engagements that, as well as providing much needed funds, are seen as a way of making their centres relevant and accessible to the wider community.

We've got people going to the second-hand clothes shop who would never come into the Buddhist centre.

(Matthew)

I suppose I'm quite interested in giving people a taste of- you could say a taste of the Buddha's vision without them really knowing about it. It's a bit like at Lama's Pyjamas, not everyone would even know that we're Buddhist, but they might leave the shop feeling, 'wow, I had a really nice chat with her' or 'that was a really good interaction'. They can't quite say what it is but they pick up on it.

(Sarah)

Jamyang has a café, several function rooms and office spaces that can be hired by local businesses, although they are selective about to whom they will rent spaces and limit

themselves to small, ethical, businesses and NGOs. They also deploy the former prison cells for renting on a bed and breakfast basis.

Second, meditation has been key for making Buddhism relevant publically for all Buddhist centres, particularly the new Western focussed centres (as McKenzie (2014) also highlighted in a different context). Guided meditation for newcomers to Buddhism was available at all the centres visited with the exception of the Wat Buddharam. Though there is an aspiration at all centres that such activities will encourage new people to join the Buddhist faith, such an outcome is not obligatory and, generally, the provision is or claims to be welcoming of secular participants.

I think [teaching meditation] is offering life tools to people and those tools are of use to people and it may or may not be that they want to integrate them with the complete package of Buddhism. And I feel I'm planting seeds and it may be in the future that they realise that they want a bit more and they've had a sense of Buddhism and they'll come back to it... It's nice when that happens.

(Robert)

Western Buddhist movements have also made significant inroads into mindfulness courses which are deliberately secular and entirely separate from their Buddhist practice. For example, the LBC has a space specifically designed to be adapted from a Buddhist meditation hall into a secular space called Breathing Space, and Jamyang also offers secular mindfulness meditation. This has reflected a wider public interest in mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn 2006, The Guardian, 2016), and its therapeutic recognition by the British National Health Service (NHS, 2016). LBC's mindfulness initiative followed that of their sister centre in Manchester, who were offering mindfulness retreats for full time carers. As one practitioner, Dr. Paramabandhu Groves, who led the development of Breathing Space at the LBC explained:

[Initially] there was some concern. ..we've always made it very clear that our beginners classes are open to anybody. You don't have to be Buddhist, you can come along and learn to meditate... although we have the big Buddha figure we didn't light the candles because somehow that was being religious, you've got the Buddha figure though [laughs] so it sounds a bit ridiculous I suppose what I'm saying in that is that there was always sensitivity to .. make it really accessible to anybody and not bash people over the head with Buddhism ... sometimes, actually, I think too much, I think we were almost too shy of saying it's a Buddhist Centre which it obviously was. I think that has changed over the years as Buddhism's become more wide and accessible. ..Having said that, there were some concerns from some quarters.. who feared that in a way it was watering down the dharma.

(Dr. Paramabandhu Groves)

Third, there is engagement with local communities, which was evident in all the Buddhist centres visited. For many centres, particularly those affiliated with older, non-Western movements, the centres act as a point of connection to the country or region of origin. Wat Buddhapadipa in particular has language and cultural classes for children of Thai families and all distribute non-English newspapers from the country of origin. Each of the centres openly encourages visitors to come and look around. Wat Buddhapadipa and the London Buddhist Vihara also had connections with local school that enabling the school to hold assemblies and other events there. Three Wheels, although somewhat hidden in an indistinguishable suburban house opens, its spectacular Zen garden to the public for the National Gardens Scheme's open gardens day (NGS, 2016).

Some Buddhist centres extend a caring role in the local community. For example, at Wat Buddhapadipa we were introduced to a homeless man who regularly attends the temple to eat and help out there. Similarly, on an early visit to the LBC, we

witnessed a man in some distress sitting talking to one of the workers in the garden. In a more formalised caring capacity, the LBC also makes its retreat centres in rural parts of the UK available for respite breaks for full time carers of elderly or disabled people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, how does Buddhism fit into the postsecular urban landscape, what makes it distinctive and for whom does it matter? The number of people declaring themselves as Buddhists has indeed risen in recent years, following the rise of other non-traditional religions in the UK, however this research suggests that Buddhism differs from these in several ways. First, it is a faith whose growth is not predominantly attributable to the rise in new migrant communities in the city (though this does have a contributory effect). Rather it owes its growth predominantly to an increased interest expressed by people attracted to the religion for its practices of meditation and mindfulness, which are seen as helpful in dealing with the hectic and stressful pressures of everyday life in the city. Second, Buddhism remains largely invisible in the urban and suburban landscape of London, adapting buildings that are already in place, with little material impact on the built environment; as a result its arrival in the urban landscape has been less subject to contestation than other religious practices¹. Third, Buddhist practices, such as meditation, are quiet, and even where chanting takes place it bears no resemblance to the loud singing and music of many of the new popular religious practices associated with Evangelical Christianity. Buddhism has no sonic presence in the city- there is no call for prayer as in mosques, or church bells. There is no proselytizing and followers find their own way to Buddhist practice, often through a

¹ This is not to suggest that there are no Buddhist temples in some cities that are purpose built or more visible. In London however, there are few of these.

very personal path rather than public, familial or ethnic connections. In each of these ways, Buddhism operates almost under the radar from public view. At a broader socio-political level, Buddhist practitioners from overseas are not associated with wider political or fundamentalist movements, sharing neither the conservatism of some of the Evangelical Christian movements, which is articulated publically in relation to debates around gay equality for example, neither are they subject to wider demonising discourses of association with terrorism which have plagued some Muslim communities.

In this paper we have demonstrated also the importance of religious practices. All Buddhist groups, with varying degrees of both willingness and success, seek to make aspects of their Buddhist faith accessible to the wider community whether through offering catering, public access to their buildings and gardens, or through offering mindfulness-led mental health initiatives. And while Buddhist practitioners might like to encourage outsiders to become part of the faith, these community engagement practices are neither directly nor implicitly motivated by congregation building objectives. This research has thus revealed that Buddhism features as a small but significant part of the postsecular urban landscape, but that it differs in various ways from other religions that have had a growing presence in the city in recent years. This study has shown the importance of a focus on religious practices as well as faith, and contributes to a growing sociological and geographical set of literatures that point to the significance of religion in the making of contemporary urban social worlds.

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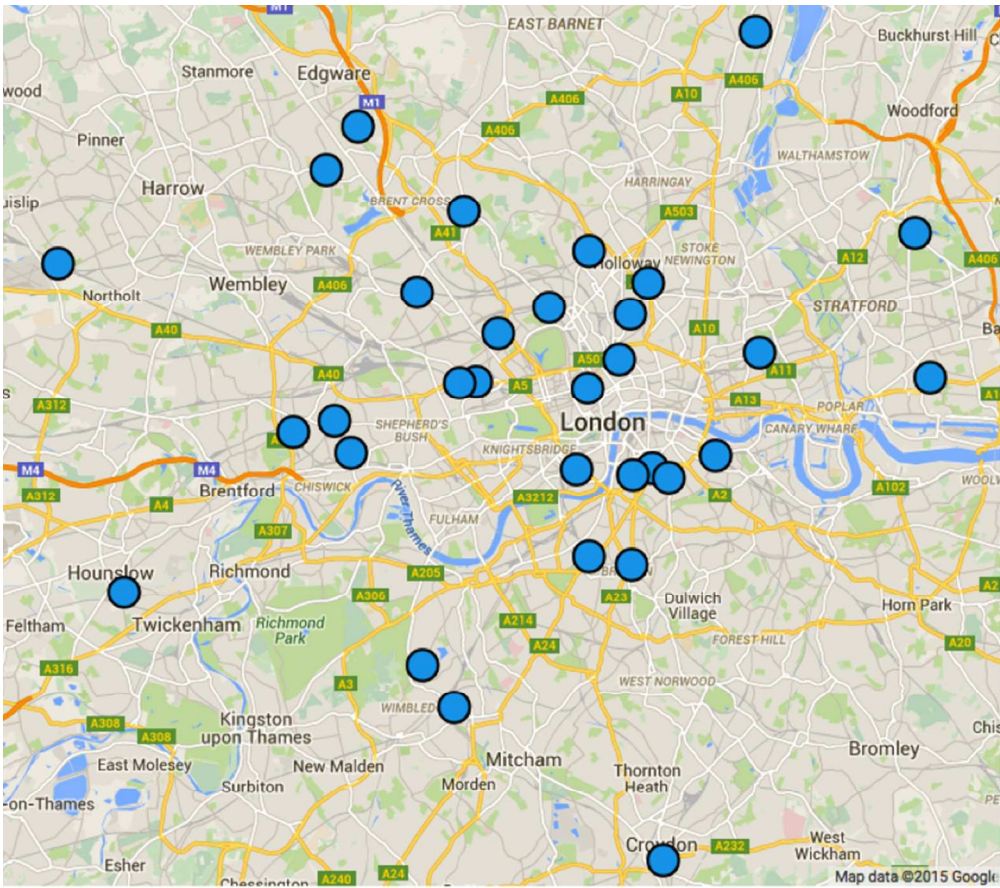


Figure 1: Map showing the location of the thirty-three places of Buddhist faith practice identified in London.
(Map date © Google Maps 2015, points xplotted using hamstermap.com)

Table 1: Table showing Buddhist centres visited over the research period.

Name of Centre	School of Buddhism	Further details	Location
Diamond Way	Karma Kagyu	Diamond Way founded by Lama Ole Nydahl in 1972 in order to diffuse Buddhism in the West. Follows the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism	Kennington, inner south London
Jamyang	Mahayana	Part of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Traditional (FPMT) movement which was founded in 1975 to teach Buddhism to Western students in Nepal.	Kennington, inner south London
Buddhist Society	N/A, Lay	Founded in 1924 in London by Christmas Humphreys.	Pimlico, central London
Heruka	New Kadampa	A tradition founded by Kelsang Gyatso in the UK in 1991 which draws from Mahayana Buddhist teaching deliberately reinterpreted for a Western audience.	Golders Green, suburban north-west London
London FGS	Pure Land	The Fo Guang Shan (FGS) movement was founded by Venerable Master Hsing Yun in Taiwan in 1967.	Fitzrovia, central London
Three Wheels	Shin	A branch of the Shogyoji Temple, founded in Japan in 1593.	Acton, suburban north-west London
Wat Buddhapadipa	Theravada	Thai regional tradition.	Wimbledon, suburban south London
Wat Buddharam	Theravada	Thai regional tradition.	Wanstead, suburban east London
London Buddhist Vihara	Theravada	Sri Lankan regional tradition.	Turnham Green, suburban west London
East London Buddhist Cultural Centre	Theravada	Sri Lankan regional tradition.	Newham, inner east London
London Buddhist Centre (LBC)	Triratna	Formed in the UK in 1967 as the Friends 'of the Western Buddhist Order and renamed Triratna (Three Jewels) in 2010. Intended to be a new and specifically Western interpretation of Buddhism.	Bethnal Green, inner east London
West London Buddhist Centre (WLBC)	Triratna	See above.	Royal Oak, inner west London
Rigpa	Vajrayana	Rigpa follows the Tibetan tradition. The movement was founded by	Barnsbury, inner north London

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		Sogyal Rinpoche in 1979.	
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